know that I love you

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by transcryptidone

Summary

Wedding time for our lovely Kaisergram family <3

Notes

Accompanying art here.

Chapter 1

It's warm here up on the second floor. There's a fire in the fireplace, roaring and crackling like every other fireplace in the lodge. That was the first thing they'd noticed the first time they walked in. Coming out from the biting, punishing cold, they'd felt practically *hugged* by the coziness and nothing seemed more fitting for a day like today. But now that today is actually here, all Will can think about is how stuffy and sweaty they feel. The hair that Kay from the salon across the street spent time and consideration styling just right might get damp with sweat by the hairline. What make-up that was brushed on warms when their cheek flushes and burns underneath.

There are two black garment bags, long enough to hang from the rack and still brush the floor. Will places one and then the other against the couch that sits in front of two wide windows looking out over an expanse of trees and land that stretches to the purpled silhouettes of the mountains across the way. It's a sight they still find breath-taking and still feels like home. It's still the time of year when they can just barely see their house peeking between the trees on their drive home. They won't see it from here, but the association is pleasant just the same.

A knock on the door jolts Will out of their thoughts and back into their eyes. They blink and realize they drifted off staring at an excess of clothes and doing nothing at all to get dressed. They brush their hand across their forehead and wince at the combination of feeling damp sweat and realizing too late that they might have smudged the make-up. They never really got the hang of that. Apricity will probably surpass their knowledge within the next few years. Maybe she'll insist on teaching them. Maybe they'll practice on Duncan too. That'd be nice.

"Ready?" Molly says, giving Will another jolt back to the present. Her hair is done up in a lovely sort of up-do with little white flowers tucked in the twists and turns. Her bangs fall just right against her brows, which furrows as she scrunches her nose and gives a teasing, wary sort of smile.

"Not quite," Will sighs, wincing into the finger they drag under their nose to hide it. They catch themself just before they smear their lipstick. They have to remind themself not to bite their lip either and end up with another wince that's not well-hidden at all.

"I can see that," Molly teases, grabbing their shoulders where there's still just a fluffy, white robe that is nothing like wedding-appropriate attire. She clicks her tongue teasingly and has a tone that stops just shy of kissing their cheek and having to rub off the mark of lipstick with her thumb. She dotes on Will and asks, "What's wrong?"

"I don't know," they say, furrowing their brow and closing their eyes. They pull in a deep breath and in a breathless rush remark, "I mean–I can't decide."

"There's no wrong decision," she reassures, giving Will's shoulders another couple of squeezes. "You'll look great in either."

“I thought I’d just know which to choose,” Will gripes. It’s their day. If there’s ever been a day to let it all be said exactly as it’s felt that day would be today. Will crosses their arms over their chest and grabs at the thick waffle weave of their robe. “All the other decisions were so easy.”

There hadn’t been that many people to think about inviting. It was pretty easy to choose where, especially when Molly knew everywhere worth considering in the whole state. Cost wasn’t a consideration and they didn’t want anything too over the top, which balanced out well. Many choices became choices of convenience – hair, make-up, food, and decorations. Will’s dad even knew a florist – which was a story and a half.

“Have you put either on yet?” Molly asks chidingly as she reaches over to hold up the hangers. She holds one in each hand and one brow disappears under her bangs as she smirks and asks, “Or have you been just standing here looking at them?”

Will hums and frowns when they’re caught with nothing to tell but the truth, while also knowing that admitting the truth will only invite more teasing.

“I won’t ask you to pick one to start with,” Molly says with a playful roll of her eyes. As she sets one hanger aside with the clothes resting against the unzipped bag they’d come from. The dark black fabric stands out starkly compared to her maroon dress that she’d picked out in an instant when they’d gone looking together. Molly’s excitement had been particularly infectious that day. She smiles just as bright with lips a similar deep shade of blood red. She clicks her tongue against her teeth a couple times more as she sarcastically remarks, “We’d be stuck here ‘til the end of time.”

“Hilarious,” Will deadpans, eyes meeting hers in a way they mean to be blasé, but still sharp.

Molly looks at them with a quirk of her brow that says: *you know I’m right.* She holds out her first choice, lining up the sleeves hung on the hanger to Will’s shoulders and ignoring the way the fabric falls over their folded arms. “Put this one on first.”

Will sighs but does as they’re told, slipping off their robe and tossing it aside. They shiver slightly as the absence of the cozy comfort lets in the last bit of cold. As they carefully lift fabric from one end of the hanger and then the other, it’s cool to the touch, taking in the cold through the windowpane. But it’s soft too, that’s what had sold them on it in the end. Molly had gone with them on their shopping spree – or shopping mission. They’d stepped into the store with determination to find what they were looking for and *quick.* Two steps in and it seemed like Molly already had twelve dresses for them to try on.

Although Molly stayed outside on a couch while the shopkeeper dressed Will and made idle Midwest chitchat then, she now helps to fasten the delicate, little, hard to reach button just below the nape of Will’s neck and zips the zipper in the middle of their lower back. Then her arms loop around Will’s hips and her eyes meet theirs in the mirror.

Molly sighs, positions them in front of a full-length mirror, and says, “As striking as I remember.”

Will blushes and bites their lips as a smile pulls at the corners. They click their tongue and roll their eyes at themself, smoothing their hands along the first tier of their skirt – both fingernails and dress a similar shade of dark black – and remarking, “It’s been a while since I’ve dressed like this.”

They hadn’t been sure what to wear for The Big Day. They haven’t worn a dress since they finished healing after the twin’s birth. They’d gone from enjoying the flowy ease of a dress to needing to just be able to bend over without worrying about showing their ass. There were too many kids to look after and clean up behind and so they wore Duncan’s clothes until they finally bought some of their own. Before walking into a store stocked to the brim and lined with dresses in the window, Will knew that the mission could prove to be a bust. That it hadn’t was almost…surprising. That it was a hard decision to make, even more so.

Molly smiles big and wide and unafraid to show her teeth or her joy. Her fingers primp the slightly sheer sleeves that cascade from shoulder to wrist. She praises and teases at once when she says, “You look just as good as you did showing up in my shop with a big ol’ belly.”

Will can’t hold back their laugh as their hands flatten against a band of detailed lace wrapped around their middle at the waist. That band sits much flatter than it would have then. That day meeting Molly was probably when they looked their best – and Duncan would probably agree. There’s something about looking back on it that offers particular nostalgia. Everything was so astounding and brand new. Every bit of growth from their not-yet-firstborn was a new revelation. With their second, they’d known what to expect – even if Juni did end up being a whopper. And there was certainly something astounding about carrying the twins, but still not quite so seemingly *unknowable.*

“Do you want to try the other one?” Molly offers.

Will takes a deep breath in and out and shakily nods. “Will you hand it to me?”

Molly doesn’t tease even though it’s just on the tip of her tongue. Will can see it in the look in her eyes. But she doesn’t tease and just steps out from behind them to reach and pull out another hanger. As soon as Molly’s eyes glance away and break eye contact, Will’s gaze drifts back to their reflection. It ended up taking a lot to pick this one. There was an attempt to sell them on the idea of white, of course. But they not only no longer can claim to belong in white on their wedding night, but more importantly because their kids couldn’t be trusted to let clothes stay white for very long. So, after white was done away with, they’d had far fewer dresses to choose from. One dress had more sheer and more lace, but looked better fitting for a funeral. It came down to deciding between a more elaborate option and this one.

“There you go getting lost in thought again,” Molly chides as she lifts the other hanger and holds it out for Will to take.

Will slips the fabric from the hanger with the same care as they had the dress, even if this fabric is much sturdier. As Molly circles around them to diligently unbutton that delicate little button once more, Will holds up the suit jacket aligned with their shoulders and holds their own gaze in the mirror. It’s a fine dark black jacket with pants to match still on the hanger perched on Molly’s fingers, alongside a crisp white shirt and black tie. There’s another suit

just like this one in the *Groom's Room.* Though Will hasn't seen him in it, they know from looking at their own iteration, that the groom will look plenty handsome in it. The problem is that Will isn't sure that the suit suits them just as well. The problem is Will likes the idea of the newlyweds wearing clothes that match just as well as they do.

Molly pauses the turn of her fingers on the little button and instead reaches over their shoulder to replace Will's hand and take back the jacket. Will is content to let her. The black jacket drapes over Will's shoulder as Molly carefully guides where it falls and as the dress is revealed once more, Will takes in the sight again and takes stock. Gives an eerie feeling, like deja vu. Their mind's eye remembered a slightly different image. The problem is Will isn't sure if that's for better, worse, or just *is.*

"Here," Molly prompts as she guides Will's arms into the sleeves before they even have time to consider or protest. She settles the jacket on their shoulders and brushes her hand down to loop around Will's waist and button the middle button instead. She hooks her chin over their shoulder and squeezes her arms tight in a firm hug. It softens the way her eyes might seem to pierce them as she holds eye contact through the reflection and asks, "What do you think?"

Will might smile and frown at once as they feel both affection and vulnerability simultaneously. Thinking of the open back, billowing sleeves, and slightly cinched waist, they worry aloud: "It's covering up the best parts."

"You're the best part," Molly insists and, when Will scoffs, she squeezes her arms tighter just once teasingly and remarks, "It's cheesy, sure, but you know Duncan would agree."

Will thinks of their groom, a man with so few words that the ones he chooses become all the more impactful. He says the sweetest things sometimes, made even more special by how out of the blue and entirely natural he makes it seem. Tears burn at Will's eyes as they smile and murmur, "I know."

"You can always take off the jacket whenever you want," Molly reminds them and then gives them a wink in the mirror as she adds, "Or put pants on."

"You're right," Will says as they look down towards their feet, hidden away by the length of the dress but they can still feel the cozy slippers that were provided to match the robe.

"Ready now?" Molly asks, pulling her arms back and letting Will stand on their own again like she might let go of the back of a bicycle that just ditched the training wheels.

"Yes," Will says, turning in the mirror just to make sure. The open back is covered up, just like any shape at their waist has been made boxy by the shape of the jacket instead. But the lapels of the jacket only make the plunge of their neckline that much more clear as day and when they put their hand to their heart, they feel the shiver of chilled fingers touching warm, bare skin. As they turn to face Molly, their fingers curl in a fist that rests against their sternum as they whisper to her: "Thank you."

Molly laughs and checks her hair in the mirror as she teases, "You're just as hard to corral as your children."

Will rolls their eyes at the exaggeration, likely exactly as Molly intended. Sometimes it feels like she watches their kids as often as they do. And so, they both know perhaps just as well how those kids can each be their own handful and how you can find yourself running out of hands pretty quickly. Sometimes they're herded like sheep, sometimes corralled. Most of the time, it's easier said than done. Those little ones stamp their feet so hard on the floor when they run that they might seem like a stampede. Clumsy little feet that are still so enthusiastic that they can't help but be loud about it.

A thundering of footsteps and creaking floorboards like a crack of thunder too, it all then leads to a pounding at the door and hand twisting at the doorknob. The door and walls are thick enough to muffle some of the clamor but Will's ears are trained to hear such a little voice calling out, "Zazzy!"

"Speak of the devil," Will remarks with a roll of their eyes and a smile.

Molly laughs in a light-hearted sort of way and walks over towards the door with a knob that hasn't quite twisted far enough to open yet. She's almost there when the door swings open and seemingly without having to think, her hand reaches out to catch the door before it can slam into a wall. When one of Will's curly-haired little ones comes barrelling through the door, it's Molly's reflexes and know-how that has her bending over and catching Juniper around the waist.

"Woah, there–" Molly says, gently grabbing Juni's wrist. "When did you find time to play in the dirt?"

Juniper opens and closes dirt-covered fingers, clumps of soil falling on the otherwise pristinely swept floorboards. Juni's eyes are big and wide, blinking at Will as they explain, "Bugs under the rocks."

"Bugs under the rocks? Who would have thought?" Will remarks with a laugh, kneeling down to get closer even if they stay just out of reach. They'd chosen a black dress for a reason, but that doesn't mean Will won't still give staying stain-free a fair chance. And so, though they don't yet bring themself into the reach of Juni's arms, they smile at the little mess-maker and ask, "Are there special bugs here or just the same ones from home?"

Juni pouts out their bottom lip and furrows their brow before curtly nodding and declaring, "Same ones."

Will hums, thoughtful and curious, and asks, "Did they follow us here?"

Juniper gasps, eyes staring down at their dirty, muddy hands like dirt will provide the answers and the bugs' origin story. While they think, they don't notice that Molly no longer holds them in place. They don't even seem to consider moving as transfixed as they are with the possibilities of the Earth. There's a sort of amazement in Juni's voice when they declare, "I don't know."

"You're so silly," Molly says fondly, returning with a pack of wipes that's extremely familiar. There's probably one in every room of her house and theirs and maybe even just one more that seems to accompany them wherever they go – in the truck, in a purse, tucked in the

pocket of a jean jacket. Molly pulls out one wipe and a second comes with it. Fortunately, she would have needed both anyway. She wipes down Juni's right hand first, starting with the palm. She tsks her tongue as she reminds them, "You'll need clean hands to hold the rings."

Juni's hum reminds Will of Duncan's grumble and they might have matching thoughtful frowns. Will hopes it's Duncan's agreeableness living on in Juni when they concede, "Okay."

"Are your siblings still with Grandpa?" Will asks. They'd left the kids with their grandpa while they dressed, having already wrangled the kids into their clothes first. Apricity had been talking up a storm – unbothered that the only response she might get is an occasional hum. She's used to that. The twins have gotten into the habit of humming along too. They'll hum to each other when the other one is babbling, alternating back and forth and taking turns humming and babbling.

"Mhmm," Juni replies with a nod as Molly works on wiping off the other hand too. They're dressed in a shirt with a lace detail on the front like a bib or the collar on a sailor uniform, as well as a pair of shorts, socks that go up to their knees, and shoes. Juni at least didn't dig in the dirt on their knees.

"Are they all as dirty as you are?" Molly teases, the wipes in her hands having turned a dingy color and Juni's hands not yet spotless.

"Nuh-uh," Juni says with a dramatic shake of their head that sends their curls flying.

"Alright," Molly says, balling up the wipes in one hand and rising to her feet. She keeps that wad of wipes tucked in her palm with a couple fingers and her thumb and uses her pointer and middle finger to affectionately touch the back of Juni's head. "Come with me," she cajoles. "You have a very important job to do."

Molly shepherds Juniper out of the room with a gentle touch, nudging and laughing with Juni when their toe gets caught and they stumble. The hold they have on each other's hand is what ultimately keeps Juniper from tipping over. Their little fingers with dirt under the nails squeeze tight around Molly's newly manicured ones. As Juni looks up at Molly, Will smiles and has to reign in the urge to take the few quick steps to join the two of them and scoop Juni into their arms, fancy clothes be damned.

But Molly closes the door behind her and silence descends, creating the alone time Will might feel they never get to have. And even the silence rings in their eyes, louder and louder the more they notice it. They look away from the mirror and out the window, seeing the snow capped mountains and wondering if the grass isn't always greener. Desperate for alone time and what they find is shrill silence. It has them turning, slippers quietly shuffling as the dress' train brushes against the wood floor, and bracing their hand against one of the many logs that stack up to build the mighty walls of this lodge out in the woods. They take hold of the second tier skirt and pull the fabric high enough to kick off the slippers.

Their socks and boots aren't far away. Both pairs sit by a wingback chair near the door. Just as practical as the black color of their dress, their black boots are just as practical. No need for heels that are too high or too uncomfortable. Their boots are reliable and already broken in. They slip their feet into their boots one at a time, a familiar motion to lend something

ordinary to an extraordinary day. Walking through the door and descending down the staircase, there's something familiar about the squeak of the boards and steps that might seem just a little off – not enough to be obviously dangerous, but enough to solidify the banister as much more than decorative and Will's hand sliding down is not just an expression of getting caught up in the moment.

As their dress cascades behind them, they feel elegant. As they see a familiar box of colored pencils and pad of paper, they feel themself settle a little further into their skin and step a little surer in their shoes.

"Oh, Flower Girl!" Will calls out as they smile fondly at the little girl sat cross-legged on the floor, the tip of her nose barely above the piece of paper she draws on.

Her curls cascade down her back, treated and styled just as nicely as Will's have been. They get tossed further over her shoulder and tucked behind her ear as she perks up. She nearly throws her pencil across the table. It teeters just at the edge about to fall, tipping even more dangerously as she pushes herself up from the table. In another thundering of feet, she runs over and nearly slams into Will when she hugs them.

"Beautiful Zazzy!" Apricity exclaims, squeezing tighter and yanking just a bit against the back of the dress.

"Thank you, Miss Priss," they say as they pet their hand along her hair. Beyond the ends of her curls is lace much like Juniper's, a soft flounce cascading from the neckline like a little lace capelet. When she releases her squeezing hold just enough to tip her head up, Will brushes their thumb over her pink, soft cheek and compliments, "You look lovely."

"Daddy's dressed too," she tells them, rising up on her tiptoes and giving a sweet smile and scrunch of her nose as she singsongs, *"Very* handsome."

"Daddy had the easy job today," Will remarks with a laugh.

They know they're not supposed to see each other before the proper moment, but they do find themself wondering if their groom is still tucked away in his room or if he's stepped out for his last cigarette before the ceremony. There's a throb of their heart as they glance to a clock hung on the way between two sets of mounted antlers – *almost time*. They brush the stray little strands of hair away from their firstborn's forehead and there's something about the feeling that seems absolutely perfect, like everything aligns just right – even when the hairs spring right back where they were.

They hum and request, "Will you find Miss Dana and ask for your flowers?"

Apricity's eyes widen and she states almost conspiratorially, "Miss Dana and Grandpa kissed."

"I know," Will says with a laugh and smooths another adoring pet along the length of her hair. "I think they like to do that."

“Oh,” Apricity remarks, one part curious and another part has already lost interest and moved on to the next thing. “Are they getting married too?”

“Not today,” they reply with another laugh. Learning about their dad’s love life might have been just as surprising to Will as it seems to have been for Apricity, but they hadn’t even considered the idea of another wedding in the family anytime soon. Though they hadn’t quite expected to get married themself anytime soon and now here they are with a wedding added to the list of happy surprises, welcomed and cherished. “Today is for Zazzy and Daddy.”

It only takes a few more nudges and another nice request to send Apricity on her way. After she’s scampered off, Will remembers the colored pencils still spilled out across the table. Just like they have many times before, they pick the pencils up by the handful and drop them in the box, smiling as they hear the familiar sound of dogs barking happily outside. A box of pencils in the crook of their arm and a pad of paper tucked underneath, Will looks out the window where sunlight and cold chill pour in through the pane. They let the sunlight warm their skin as the chill tingles at their nerve-endings.

Cold always has a way of reminding them that they’re alive. They feel every hair that raises with goosebumps, every pound of their heart as it races, every breath of air that fogs against the glass when they sigh. Blinking against the sunlight, there’s a silhouette like shadow in the distance and a cloud drifting up and away with its own deep sigh. Will would know that shadow anywhere and, although they might want nothing more than to come closer and feel just how solid that shadow is under their touch, Will turns away and feels the sunlight warm their back like joyous anticipation.

Chapter 2

The sun still sets early this time of year. Doesn't help that it hardly seems to rise in the first place. Maybe there's a window right around noon when something like daylight is achieved, but the gray of the rest of the day doesn't quite seem to qualify. The daylight is there and gone in the blink of an eye and the sun seems to set twice as quick. It's something he's gotten used to and seemed to be about the only thing he could contribute to the wedding planning. Not that he minded that at all. They decided together to start their ceremony at the time of day when the sun still offers some brightness but the candles also get their chance to glow amongst the string lights.

It all seems so still and calm. Duncan's heart pounds and his blood races, his hands squeezing in fists just to give the tension somewhere to go. He's not sure what to call this feeling. Maybe he'll ask Will to describe it later. They'll have the right words for it and he knows they must be feeling it just the same.

He hasn't seen his soon-to-be spouse since yesterday. It's not the longest stretch of time they've ever been apart, but there's something in the air that makes him all the more aware of the distance. He slept like shit the night before, squished as he was between Apricity and Juniper, who'd had the option to sleep in the other bed that was big enough for the both of them. But he'd still slept better than he might have alone, with only his own body heat to keep the blankets from getting cold.

He had an extra cup of coffee this morning and his shower helped to wake him up. The cigarette steadied his hands a bit and calmed the urge to shift on his feet. Still, he's not sure if he was just lost in thought or drifted to the edge of sleep. Whichever it is, he jolts to stand up straighter and squeezes his fists tighter to remind himself of the control he has down to his fingertips.

He turns and looks, both hoping to see Will and hoping not to. At first, it seemed sort of inconvenient to have to avoid each other for such a stretch of time. It seemed to be a constraint that decided some things for them and created some more questions. *Who should the kids stay with? The pictures will be taken after the ceremony. Will there be enough light? They might have to make it quick...Who's going to make sure they don't run into each other trying to walk down the aisle?*

"Have you seen my son?" Molly asks him. Her palm flattens and drags down her bangs to make sure they're still laying as they should. She turns her head and scans with her eyes as she tsks her tongue and remarks, "I told him to look up at the clock every so often."

"In the bathroom," he tells her.

Wally had slumped into a chair and let himself get lost in his video game until he glanced at the clock with only five minutes to spare. But as soon as he remembered time ticking by, he hopped to it and set the game aside, catching up with Duncan and matching his stride. They'd walked together to the double doors that would lead into the event space when opened. Wally

then excused himself to the bathroom and left Duncan staring at the door handle and clenching his hand in a fist that absent-mindedly twisted and turned.

“That’s a good idea, actually,” Molly says, raising her brows until they disappear under her bangs and nodding her head enough to have the hair that’s been curled, twisted, braided, and pinned up swaying slightly. Her eyes flit from the hallway back towards him and she remarks, “Luckily, you two go first.”

Duncan hums, eyes reflexively glancing around to look for his own kids. Two of them should already be sitting with their grandpa. But the oldest two have their roles to play and their place in the processional, sequentially placed in between their parents – the spouses-to-be. With Wally walking alongside Duncan and Molly with Will, this wedding will celebrate families intertwining like any other wedding might.

“Thanks for doing this,” Molly says, then rolls her eyes as they glisten with tears. Her laugh comes out choked too as she clarifies, “For asking Wally to be your best man.”

Duncan doesn’t comment on the tears, but he gives Molly his full attention and deepest sincerity as he murmurs, “Walter would be proud of him.”

Molly’s sharp inhale says everything. She holds her breath and nods until tears and air come rushing out. “Yeah,” she nearly gasps. Her smile wobbles, but carries on as she says, “He would, wouldn’t he?”

There’s no doubt about it in his mind. He’d never met anyone like Walter before and still hasn’t since. Walter was a hard-worker. He did his job in sunshine or sleet. When he actually started complaining, that’s how they’d known something wasn’t right. He never joined in when client’s made jabs and jokes about their nagging wives. It was easy to tell that Walter was a man who loved his wife and his son absolutely. Duncan had never met anyone like that and Walter seemed to know that. In all the time they spent together, there were so many wise words of fatherhood passed on along the way.

“Mom?” Wally says, adjusting where the knot of his tie sits against his throat. He got a haircut for the occasion and let it be styled too. Though Wally might not admit to liking it, Duncan wouldn’t be surprised if he kept this style going for a while.

“Don’t you look handsome,” Molly praises, buttoning the middle button on Wally’s vest that must have been forgotten in the scramble to make it on time. “All set?”

“Yeah,” Wally replies with a nod and shooing away his mother’s fussing hands. He rolls his eyes but still smiles despite his best efforts to remain *cool*. It makes Duncan feel old to think about how much Wally has grown as he’s known him – from just a kid to a *teenager.* He’s already almost taller than Will and he hardly has to tip his head up to look Duncan in the eye and ask, “You?”

“Yeah,” Duncan states, gripping a hand at Wally’s shoulder and realizing after the fact that it’s what Walter used to do. He and Wally might realize it at the same time. And maybe Molly too.

She claps her hands together to break the moment they might all seem stuck in and smiles – though it might be a bit forced – as she remarks, “Well then, let’s get this shindig started.”

As Molly whisks away to set everything in motion, Duncan’s heart might pound in his chest so hard the sound could drown out the click of her heels. Duncan’s fingers flex and he clasps his hands in front of him. Away from the fireplace, his fingers have gotten chilled. He rubs his hands together, hoping to warm them once more before he holds hands with his beloved partner.

When they get their cue, he and Wally pull open those doors just as smoothly as they had during the practice run the night before. The candles are lit just as they should be and what hazy sunlight remains gives enough light to see the altar and small arrangement of chairs as plain as day. Bill and Dana are already sitting, each with one of the twins in their lap most likely. Duncan can’t quite see the two littlest ones until he takes a few steps closer to the lodge-owner/officiant and the wood-carved altar. Though he wants to look at his feet and duck his head away from the photographer snapping photos, thinking of those twins with their big, blinking eyes and rosy cheeks keeps his head up and eyes looking to see them.

It was a given that this wedding would be small. Their list of potential guests wasn’t long to begin with. Duncan had no family to invite beyond than those found and made along the way. They could have invited the accountant that’s managed his fund since the man had made sure Duncan still got it. They could have invited the owner of the pet store across the street, particularly considering Will is going into business with them by turning the vacant store next door into a doggy daycare and training school. But they’re watching the dogs right now. The more they talked about the people they *could* invite, the more they settled on only having their nearest and dearest – and Bill’s girlfriend, not that Duncan has anything against her.

The smaller they knew the wedding would be, the next question became whether to still have a big to-do. They could just have it done at the courthouse and have dinner that the newlyweds neither had to make nor clean-up after. That could have been special enough. But they looked at suits and Will bought a dress, then Bill just happened to know a lady who could provide flowers, and somewhere along the way it just made sense to go all out. Duncan is glad now that they went for it. His darling daughter and precious child walking down the aisle arms linked together is an experience like no other.

They both smile big and unrestrained. Apricity carries a basket in one hand and using the other to toss flower petals on the floor. Meanwhile, Juniper clutches two squares of fabric that glint where the rings are affixed. As the two oldest make their way down the aisle, it’s a stretch of time that holds stillness and reverence. Duncan takes a deep breath in and feels his chest expand as he basks in the glory of such happiness. Bringing these two comfort and happiness – just like the two sitting in their little suits front and center – it’s a joy that at another time in his life would have seemed impossible. They smile at him, trust him to catch them if they fall, and forgive him if he falters so long as he makes it better. The breath caught in his chest lets out in a contented sigh as the flower girl and ring bearer take their seats.

His knees go wobbly though at the sight of *Will.* And this is a sight that Duncan will always be glad he didn’t miss out on. Will looks to be themself enhanced. The curl of their hair is tidy compared to the mess that can be made by running after kids and bedhead from grabbing

what sleep they can get during naptime. Their skin glows with the candlelight all the way from their hairline, down their neck, and across the plane of their chest. The dress and fabric create a multilayered cascade of deep black that only sets off the ivory tints of their skin tone all the more. The hands holding their bouquet might seem to be made from porcelain or marble, strong enough to stand the tests of time like the statue of David.

He's stunned. Absolutely stunned. Can't move a muscle but for his heart to pound in his chest and his eyes to blink back tears. He's reminded all over again that Will is *everything*, all at once. The layer of suit jacket over dress is akin to layer upon layer of Will's person, each one giving way to another side of them until they're rendered bare and open and *vulnerable.* And that's when Will is most radiant.

But peeling off layers will have to wait, just as they waited to see each other until this moment. And how glad he is for that. Waiting until this moment was worth it to take in such a sight all at once. And it's made all the sweeter by how he'd just been longing for his partner's touch and presence perhaps more than ever before. He's reaching for Will's hands as soon as they've handed away their bouquet. He holds both of those hands and holds them tight as they stand toe-to-toe at the altar. He feels a chill at Will's fingertips that matches his own and he curls his fingers tighter to lend them the warmth in his palms.

"Friends and Family," the officiant announces from beneath the altar. She's a middle-aged, Midwest blonde and might wear the same skirt suit today as she had showing them around. She smiled just as nicely and kindly as she discussed this lodge she owns and made it very easy to imagine her as the pleasant background to their special day. Her voice is mellow and her accent has become amiably familiar as she carries on, "Welcome and thank you for being here on this important day. We are gathered together to celebrate the very special love between Will and Duncan by joining them in marriage."

Will squeezes his fingers and Duncan doesn't even want to blink. He feels torn deciding whether to look at the crowd as they're addressed or staring at his partner to his heart's content. He's never been more desperate to marry Will than he is right now. He's never felt more *impatient.* And Duncan would have said that patience was his best quality – one tested by his kids on a regular basis. He glances away for just a moment to look at those lovely kids and gives a small smile at the sight of their big, sweet, blinking eyes all lined up in a row.

"Will and Duncan," the officiant says, shifting on her feet and holding some sort of book close. It's not a Bible and Duncan doesn't really care to know the specifics. Regardless, she holds the book like the source of her wisdom and announces, "Your marriage today is the public and legal joining of your souls that have already been united as one in your hearts. Marriage consists of entrusting our deepest selves into the loving care of another. Today, you commit to each other in profound trust and promise to embrace conflict as well as peace; to work as well as play; to struggle as well as coast; to give as well as receive; and to be with, stay with, and move toward one another."

Duncan gives his *oh-so-soon-to-be* spouse a wink just to try to get them to laugh. Will tips their chin down to try to hide the way it works. When Duncan might manage to feel glad for the camera, there's a blush burning at his cheeks that only burns brighter the more he tries to suppress it. The look in Will's eyes says *payback* and he adores them.

The officiant's next announcement reminds them to behave: “Our beloved couple have prepared vows that they will share now."

“On days like today — big days, special days — I’m reminded of all the ways our lives could have turned out differently,” Will recalls without hesitation. They lick their lips and move a half-step closer, tilting their head up so that he can see them clear as day. Their eyes shine and beckon him into sharing their memories together once again. Their voice is loud and clear enough for their loved ones to hear and still they speak to Duncan’s heart with the intimacy of a whisper. “I think of what loneliness and heartbreak and hardship we could have faced without each other, if even just one of many things was changed. If we never met at school, never talked, never kissed, never had our baby — or two or *four*. If we’d never made a family or a home.”

Tears shine in Will’s eyes as they sting at the edge of Duncan’s. The idea of no wedding, no births, no birthdays with half the cake seeming to end up smeared across the baby’s face… The idea of instead going off to college and studying *whatever* – bugs, psychology, Russian, who knows – and feeling that there’s something that *should* be there but isn’t. Seeing no end to the lonely days, fearing that loneliness would be what they knew best until their dying day.

“And when I think of all those possibilities, all the ways what I have could’ve slipped through my fingers, I know that I have to hold on tight to this dear life of ours. In those moments, I know as truly and clearly as I’ve ever known anything, that your hands are the ones I long to hold until my dying breath,” Will says as honest and heartfelt as Duncan could believe anyone has ever been. They look at him with such heart-mending sincerity as they squeeze his hands tight. “Because these hands are the ones that welcomed our babies into the world, cradled them, cherished them, cared for them, and kept them safe. Just as I always knew you would. Just as you have always done for me. Just as I always hope to do for you.”

Duncan can feel the sob caught at the back of his throat and he holds their hands with the strength they see in him, bolstered by the way Will believes he could carry the world on his shoulders. Will doesn’t force it or put pressure; they simply see it in him and help him to see it too.

“I love you,” Will says, their voice faltering as their lips wobble. Their exhale comes out as a teary gasp as they continue, “You know that right?”

“I do,” he rasps, knowing so much more now than he had when he’d heard those words in one of many motel rooms. He’d been wrung out and as tired as he’s ever been – even after the twins were born. Night and day he’d watched over the person he loved most in the world, the *only* person he loved – not counting the unborn. All he’d hoped was that they’d someday love him too. Then he learned that they *already did.*

Will’s lips turn more surely towards a smile as they state, “Don’t you ever forget it.”

“I won’t,” he promises as he had then and means it just as certainly. He hasn’t forgotten it for a moment since and has no intention to change that. He’s been lucky that Will hardly gives him a chance to.

“When you came into my life,” he says, reciting his words with intentionality and certainty. He pulls in a deep breath and lets it out again, trying to find his voice beyond a tear-filled rasp. “I was simply existing and didn’t know there was any other way to be. You taught me what life can offer beyond just *living.* Where there once was nothing of note, nothing to care about, nothing to look forward to, there was suddenly joy and *love.* I never expected that — never even thought to hope for it. And now that you’ve given me this, I will cherish it each and every day until my last.”

Will’s sniffle cuts through the silence that lingers after Duncan’s vows have had their time to resonate. And then a baby *squeals.* Laughter sounds out like applause in the audience and even those front and center join in. Will smiles big and wide with all their perfect white teeth all in a nice line. The kids aren’t old enough yet to know for sure, but Duncan hopes they get Will’s smile, teeth and all.

The officiant couldn’t even help herself – if she tried at all – and when she manages to wrangle her laughter back in order, she announces just as clearly as before: “Will, do you take Duncan to be your husband?”

“I do.”

The officiant smiles and nods, turning towards him and asking: “Duncan, do you take Will to be your spouse?”

“I do.”

The officiant smiles and nods at him as well and then speaks beyond them to the crowd sitting in the chairs arranged around them. “The rings Will and Duncan exchange will act as a symbol of love and commitment to each other,” she announces. “Rings are a precious metal; they are also made precious by those wearing them.”

Molly turns in her chair as subtly and quietly as she can – but it was going to be obvious no matter what. She taps Juniper on the hand and reminds them that this is their cue. They squeeze the fabric in each of their hands as they blink between their parents and Molly.

“Will and Duncan would like each of you to join them in making these rings even more precious,” the officiant continues as Juniper does their thinking. She keeps her pacing slow and serious but cracks a smile when Juni finally hops up and passes the rings along. “As these rings are passed between you, you will leave behind your fingerprint on this precious metal as you’ve touched their precious lives.”

The rings pass from hand to hand. Once Juniper releases the rings and the cloths they’re affixed to from their clutches, they’re passed along to Molly, who looks through the scrunched-up fabric to find the rings and fold back the fabric covering them They lay cradled in her palms side-by-side, tucked in safely like eggs in a bird’s nest. She looks down at them like a mother bird might. She looks at them for a quiet moment, then curls her fingers around them and clutches her closed fists to her chest over her heart.

Once Molly passes the rings along, Wally comes next. He takes a simple, thoughtful moment, holding each ring between his pointer finger and thumb. Then he passes it along to Dana sat

beside him, who shows the rings to Eira in her lap and keeps the rings just beyond the reach of a baby who would be all too happy to pop them in their mouth. Bill has to take the same sort of care when Dana carefully places the rings into his open hand. He tightens the arm that holds Brina close and keeps them sat on his lap while he brings his hands together to look at the rings that will represent the union between his child and their husband.

It's quiet and subtle, but Duncan hears Will's inhale and feels the way they tense. It still touches on a nerve sometimes, an old wound that has mostly healed but the scar still twinges from time to time. Will still remembers sometimes how Bill hadn't believed in them – in *either* of them – and that this wedding was once a dream Will had *despite* him. But Will also exhales and rubs their thumb against Duncan's hand as Bill brushes his thumbs against the rings and kisses his sweet grandchild on the crown of their head. Sometimes wounds twinge as a reminder to help them heal a little more.

From Bill, the rings are handed to Apricity, who hops up from her seat and as she takes steps back towards Juni, she rubs the fabric against her cheeks with a smile. The action somehow reminds Duncan of all the special blankets they have at home: the first blanket he bought her, the blanket they accidentally stole from the hospital when Juniper was born, and the couple more blankets they stole on purpose when taking the twins home. They made for good burp cloths, good at absorbing drool, and good for soaking up little teardrops. It's not the same fabric as the pieces clutched in Apricity's hands, but there's something familiar in the way Apricity passes them along to Juniper.

From big sister to younger sibling, the rings return to the hands they started in. Juniper's hands with a baby's soft pudge bring the rings towards their lips with the sound of a big smacking kiss. Then, as Juniper take the last remaining steps in their duty as ring bearer, they stumble. Duncan reacts quickly, dropping Will's hands only so that he can catch Juni before they crash into the ground. His hands are instinctively solid and sure, while also reminding himself to keep the touch gentle. He sighs and smiles at Juni as they blink up from under their long lashes and offer him the rings once and for all.

"Here, Daddy," they murmur.

Duncan smiles a bit more and reaches up to brush Juni's messy curls to the side so he can kiss their forehead. He takes the rings as he's given them and murmurs back, "Thank you, June bug."

Juniper makes their way back to Molly without any fuss, but quietly insists on sitting in her lap. They take about as long to settle in as it takes for Will and Duncan to pluck the rings from where they're affixed to the cloths. It's easily done. In between Duncan's fingers is a ring with a simple band of matte silver and as he twists the ring, the curved rays of a sunburst fan out from a small jewel inset like sun risen halfway over the horizon.

"I give you this ring as a token and pledge of our constant commitment and abiding love," Duncan says, taking Will's hand gently and carefully sliding the ring along their finger to settle where it will belong forever more. His voice rasps as he vows, "From this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, to love and to cherish, until death do us part."

Duncan knows these words to be absolutely, unequivocally true. They have already been through poorer and richer times. They've been through better and worse. They've had the crumpled cash left in Will's purse and a motel room that was only theirs for the night. They have been healthy, exhausted, with sick kids, and nausea that had nearly kept Will bedbound – not to mention when Duncan was injured on the job. They've loved and cherished each other through it all. And that's how Duncan knows without a doubt that this promise is another he'll be sure to keep.

"I give you this ring as a token and pledge of our constant commitment and abiding love," Will says, as they slide a matching ring onto his finger. It's the same silver matte with its own burst of silvery sun rays extending from the crescent-shaped negative space that would perfectly fit the jewel of Will's rising run. Will speaks slowly and surely and hold his gaze so firmly that they might not even blink. "From this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, to love and to cherish, until death do us part."

"And now by the power vested in me by the state of Montana, it is my honor and delight to declare you married," the officiant announces. "You may seal this declaration with a kiss."

They don't need to be told twice. Duncan may never have wanted anything more. The newlyweds move closer with well-practiced ease, chest-to-chest and heart-to-heart. Will cradles his jaw in their palms and his hands find their way to their waist. Those fingers as strong as marble hold him close as they kiss just like always and something special all at once. Their first kiss as newlyweds, but far from their first as lovers, partners, or parents. It's the comfort of the past, the excitement of the present, and the anticipation for the future. It's safety and certainty and the utter bliss that can only come from thoroughly and fully loving a person who thoroughly and fully loves him in return.

Applause and shouting and babies babbling are a welcome chorus as the setting sun paints the world with breath-taking hues. Duncan feels lit from within and so uplifted by profound gratitude that his arms wrap around his spouse to lift them up too. Will holds on tighter and lets themself be lifted, all the while smiling into a kiss that could happily go on forever.

Chapter 3

Will hums against their husband's lips. *Their husband's.* They've felt married for so long – or so they thought. Now that they're *officially* married, it's a feeling Will has never felt before. Maybe it's all the pomp and circumstance of it – the formality of a ceremony, getting all dolled up, the heart-felt vows, the song and dance, and a party in their honor. Maybe the explanation is so simple, maybe it isn't. All Will knows is that kissing their *husband* feels so *incredibly good.*

Their suit jacket is hung on the chair and Duncan's fingers travel down their back along their spine. Though that jacket was slipped off when the fireplace and flush had them feeling on the verge of *too warm,* Will shivers at such a subtle, gentle touch, barely more than a brush of bare skin. It's the delicateness of the touch that gives it such power; the *suggestion* that leads to thoughts of the wedding night. As Will smiles, they let the point of their canine dig into their beloved husband's lip – not enough to draw blood, but to let him know that though they may be newlyweds Will knows all his tricks already. The thing is though that those tricks still manage to work…

The cacophony of clinking of silverware against glass, the thuds of baby hands against the tabletop, and the clattering of plates shaken by the quake trails off as their kiss is meant to have a polite, demure end. And so it shall. Just as each kiss demanded by one of their guests around the dinner table has only had so much lingering. There's more food still to eat and speeches to recite with champagne glasses held up.

After shifting in his seat while Molly says her piece and though he might still seem reluctant to do so, Will's dad rises to his feet, still holding one of the twins – Eira this time – in the bend of his elbow. He shifts with a grunt and says as he has so many times before, "Gonna have guns as big as Duncan haulin' these kids around."

Even if they've already heard it many times, Will still laughs and can hear the quiet laughter coming from their husband. It has certainly helped that Duncan spends all day lugging logs before coming home to lug kids around. Duncan can carry one of the twins in each arm like he might carry around a hunk of wood and the twins *laugh.* They just love being carried by their dad and their grandpa. Eira smiles and waves around the ear from their puppy puzzle, nearly knocking their grandpa in the chin with it. That Eira doesn't might not really say much about their grandpa's reflexes so much as his instinct to avoid a wallop.

Dad clears his throat and then seems to regret it, looking up and away as he lowers his hand to smooth down his mustache like he'd only been thinking. His voice still rasps with another suppressed cough as he remarks, "Love ain't always easy. Really, it's all too easy to get it all wrong. At least, that's how it has seemed to me for most of my life. I didn't have wisdoms to pass on. Didn't set a good example."

Will feels caught on the edge of a knife, with time stuck in the moment when things could go one of two distinctly different ways. As they've gotten older, Will's relationship with hope has gotten more complex. No longer something they avoid at all costs. Not since the future

stopped seeming so bleak. Hoping for one kid, then hoping for two, and then having enough hope in them for all four. Somewhere along the way, hope became more like habit. They didn't have to run away from it and might even have started to tiptoe towards it. That would have had to be the case. Otherwise, their dad wouldn't be standing where he is.

"I don't know where Will got it from. I was supposed to be the one to teach them. When I failed, they knew better already," Dad says, rasp turning into a grumble that trails off as he bites his lips to hold back a frown. When the frown fights back, he scrunches his nose with a quick, sharp sniff. He shifts the baby in his arms and glances down at Apricity sitting in the chair beside him. A tear falls to wet the edge of his beard at his cheek as he looks Will right in the eye and says, "You've already taught me more in just a little over a year than I taught you in your whole life."

Duncan's touch against their back is no longer faint or teasing. His hand presses flat and his fingers spread wide like the fanning out of a wing. Will tries to breathe deep enough that they imagine expanding their lungs to press back against his touch. Otherwise, their self-awareness would have them over-analyzing every molecule of air and every slight shift in their expression. They might have forgotten to breathe until they were red in the face.

"As far as I'm concerned, today is a miracle that you two had faith in all on your own," Dad says, glancing away to include Duncan in his compliments. He then keeps his eye on the baby in his arms as he leans forward to reach for his glass of iced tea. He lifts the glass as a toast to the newlyweds and proclaims, "You've made me a true believer and I'd gladly have you over every Sunday for a good, ol' family breakfast. Maybe starting the Sunday *after* you get back from your honeymoon."

Laughter easily breaks through any tension. Smiling feels much nicer than trying to keep it all under control. Will smiles and thinks that a Sunday breakfast sounds nice. Having family traditions – birthdays, an anniversary, and Sunday breakfasts – sounds so wonderfully *simple.* The kind of simple Will might have wished to have when they were younger if they'd believed it actually existed. Now they'll know for sure it can because it will be what their kids know best.

"To the newlyweds," Dana says as she raises her glass for a toast and Will might feel pretty confident they know what she's thinking. They'd wager she's thinking about how she and Dad met — when he stopped at a flower shop to buy a bouquet that suited an apology and a birth.

Dad went back to that shop with each visit, always bringing a beautiful bouquet with him when he showed up on their doorstep. Juni took a liking to chrysanthemums and hydrangeas, fascinated by the little pieces that make up the whole — and then crushing the delicate petals in their clumsy enthusiasm. Apricity delighted at the purple edges on the petals of Montana's state flower and the twins just delighted at the sight of their grandpa. And so, even if at one point Will never would have considered it, when those big, bright eyes blink slower and slower and everyone heads for bed, the twins are carried to their cribs in grandpa's room and Duncan carries Will to the honeymoon suite.

Will wraps their arms around his neck and is reminded of being carried to a much less expensive room while the sun set behind a Vacancy sign instead of mountain peaks. Their

ankles haven't been rubbed raw and their eyes aren't red-rimmed or tear-stained. They could walk just fine on their own, but they don't have to. Duncan carries them with apparent ease and like the most natural thing in the world. And even though it may be an easy association to make now, marriage had been the last thing on their mind then. Marriage seemed like something that happened in other people's lives.

Will sinks their fingers in their husband's hair down to the ring that has settled comfortably onto their finger. With no kids trailing at their feet, Will feels tempted to yank him into a kiss before they've even actually been carried over the threshold. It would be apt. This certainly won't be their first night together. There are no jitters or uncertainty. They didn't leave any mystery for the wedding night. Will knows their husband's body as well as they know his mind – and both are just to their liking. Duncan's arms carry Will far enough and set them down gently enough at the edge of the great big bed made nicely and neatly, seemingly waiting for them to break it in.

Will slips a hand under the first tear of their skirt to detach the second tier. The fabric pools in a pile around their feet as the skirt now falls to barely brush against their knees. They sit back on the bed to reach down to take off each of their boots and cast them off a little to the left of the pile, then sigh in relief as they fall back against the bed. There's a great, big bathtub nearby and Will can't remember the last time they felt able to comfortably relax in a bathtub. Those motel rooms rarely had a bathtub and if they had, Will wouldn't have trusted them. There was no tub to ease the pain for any of their births. The bathtubs at home are the right size for their little ones – but leave the adults out in the cold where the water doesn't reach. But Will doesn't have to rush it just because the opportunity has arisen. There's a tub like this at the next place too.

Duncan takes off his jacket and drapes it over the back of a chair by the gigantic TV mounted on the wall. As he undoes his belt, Will smirks. They brush fingers without any rings through the hair that fell across their forehead and their other hand teases at the hem of their short skirt, ring finger hooking under the edge and dragging it just a little bit up their thigh. Will smirks a bit more as they watch where their husband's eyes linger. To still have this effect on each other is lovely and even lovelier that there's no end in sight.

"Did you ever think we'd be those people?" Will asks as they reach out their hand with the glinting ring like flickering sunlight. They wiggle their fingers at Duncan as he undoes his pants' button and zipper. "The ones who found love so young they'll celebrate their 50th anniversary and then some?"

Duncan hums as he takes the hand he's been offered and kneels his knee against the mattress. "Maybe 75th even," he murmurs. "If you start from the beginning."

Will's smile turns sweeter and they push themself up on their elbow so that they can give their husband a bit of a shove to urge him to sit back. The plush comforter welcomes him and Will sits up a bit more to wriggle their fingers at the knot of his tie in an effort to loosen it.

"I'd love to see what you're like at ninety-one," they muse as the knot gives just enough. Will tugs themself up further using their hold on that tie and straddles his lap. They brush their fingers more gently against the grain of his stubble to feel the prickle and drag the pad of

their thumb along the shape of his lips. “Growing up, my Dad told me that if you frown too much, it will get stuck that way.”

Duncan gives a quick hum – like a quiet laugh or a muffled scoff – and he smiles as he remarks, “I’ve never felt less like frowning in my life.”

“Sweetheart,” Will nearly coos, as soft, sweet, and adoring as they might with any of their babies. They feel so full of love, they could be drunk with it, so head over heels that it makes them woozy. They sink their fingers in his hair once more and just *have to* kiss him to ground themself in the feel of him, true and strong. So absolutely lovesick, they sigh: *“Love of my life.”*

Duncan’s hands are drawn to the bare skin of their back again, just above where the delicate zipper sits. His voice rasps so deep and resonant it might shake Will down to their spine under his fingertips as he murmurs right by their lips, “I may never have loved you more than I do now.”

Will catches his bottom lip between their teeth and gives a quick nip before teasingly questioning, “Not even on the days our babies were born?”

Duncan smiles as his fingers creep up Will’s spine as if using their backbone as steppingstones. “Four-way tie.”

“Sure, sure,” Will teases, though it’s undermined when the words catch in their throat. Their laugh is shaky as they knock their forehead against his. “I’ll miss them while we’re gone.”

“You sang a different tune yesterday,” he remarks.

“Fuck, you’re not joking,” Will says with an indulgent sigh. The kids had *refused* to settle down – each in their own way. The twins were refusing to take their nap because they were *too tired.* Apricity wanted to ask every question she could think of and then ask them all over again when she forgot the answers. Juni wanted to play outside every minute of the day – and night. Will had to take some deep breaths to keep the frustration at a manageable simmer. “Seems like forever since we’ve had any half-decent stretch of uninterrupted time.”

“We have until we have to get up and get ready for the airport,” he reminds them, fumbling with the little button at the back of their neck. “Then as soon as we check into the hotel, we can do whatever we want.”

Will hums and leans forward to relax against Duncan’s chest and tuck their face against his throat. “What if what I want to do is *nothing?”*

Duncan shrugs slightly and replies, “Fine with me.”

“It would be, wouldn’t it?” Will says, nuzzling their nose against his neck as the little button finally slips through and they feel fabric loosen. “I could be content laying in bed with you forever.”

Duncan encourages the fabric of their dress falling away and chuckles at his own joke as he remarks, “Maybe we’ll get the chance when we’re ninety-one.”

“Maybe there will be great-grandbabies to keep us on our toes,” Will suggests, the thought not truly hitting them until after they’ve said it. They have a chuckle of their own as they muse, “Could you imagine?”

“You’re the one with the imagination,” Duncan says like it’s so simple.

“And you’re just Mister Problem Solver,” Will remarks sarcastically. They pull back and anchor their hands on either side of his strong jawline as they remind him, “That takes *imagination* too, you know.”

Duncan hums like he always does when he’s not sure about accepting a compliment and states, “Not the same.”

Will tsks their tongue in a way their husband must be very familiar with by now. “Grandbabies or not,” they say, looking at their husband and imagining what he’ll look like older and grayer. They’re sure he’ll still be handsome and he’ll always be the man they love. They lean in closer for another kiss and just as heartfelt as they’d said their vows they pronounce: “I look forward to finding out what’s in store for us.”

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